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ABSTRACT

A proposed University of Arkansas administrator training program, based on University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) recommendations, and administrator attitudes to the program are described in this paper. The first part of the paper details the proposed principal certification process for a specialist degree in educational administration. The second part of the paper discusses results of a mailed questionnaire to 1,440 practicing state administrators which yielded 1,065 returns. Findings found general support for the UCEA proposals; however, the master's degree as a prerequisite to the program, full-time study requirements, and emphasis on theory were rejected by a majority of the respondents. Recommendations are made for higher degree-based administrator certification, provision of support for full-time study, and the teaching of theory as the foundation of practice. (LMI)

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# THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST IN ADMINISTRATION

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Paper Delivered at the Arkansas Association of Teacher Educators, Little Rock, April 1990

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# THE BEST AND BRIGHTEST IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

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The current reform movement in public education is not yet a decade old, but it is making its mark. Some of its ideas have already proven fallacious, many more have demonstrated great utility. One of the most cogent of the reforms has been the recognition that an effective school must have an effective leader. Furthermore, the effective leader must be an instructional leader, a curriculum leader not just a manager. Such a person can help make a school a dynamic and successful institution.

To assure the quality of leadership, two events must take place. First, the best and brightest teacher must be recruited into administration. Second, they must be well trained for their responsibilities. These two processes are both controlled by school districts and administrator training institutions. For their part, school districts should help identify perspective administrators. Historically, school administrators have been the result of self-selection. This has produced a good quality administrator, but if that quality is to be improved, then the selection methods must be improved also. How many teachers who would have made outstanding administrators have been ignored because they did not receive recognition as such from their employing district? Schools must look at their good people and sponsor them as future administrators.

It will require no great reorganization of school districts to convince them to nominate and counsel with outstanding people. The

big change will have to occur in training and this has already been a matter of concern to reformers.

As Ernest Boyer has pointed out, even prior to *A Nation at Risk*, "If the principal is the key to an effective school. . . new preparation and selection programs are required."[1]

Ever since the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, it seems impossible to pick up a copy of an educational publication without seeing some cry for reform. Various commissions, committees, and organizations have suggested a variety of changes in school requirements, curriculum, and methodology. School administration and the training of prospective administrators has not escaped the trend.

Of all of the suggestions concerning the training of administrators, that of the University Council on Educational Administration (UCEA) seems to be the most meaningful. It is certainly the most widely agreed upon. Hence this statement, developed from the thinking of the leading universities in administrator preparation, and in the light of the National Policy Board recommendations has been chosen as the basis for the reform of administrator training at the University of Arkansas.

The statement endorsed by the Higher Education Committee of the American Association of School Administrators, reads as follows:

> The aim of the Educational Administration Preparation Program is to develop school leaders who actively shape an organizational culture that promotes individual creativity and performance. Graduates should demonstrate knowledge, critical skills, and

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[1] Ernest Boyer. *High School: A Report on Secondary Eduction in America*, New York, Harper & Row, 1983, p. 223.

sensitivity to moral issues and equity in a pluralistic context. Graduates should also be capable of managing increasingly complex social and educational tasks.

**Recommendations**

1. UCEA should work aggressively and cooperatively with other segments of the profession to identify, develop, and promote a relevant, professional knowledge base for the contemporary practice of educational administration, including:

a) societal and cultural influences on schooling

b) teaching and learning processes sensitive to individual differences

c) theories of organization and organizational change

d) methodologies of organizational studies and policy analysis

e) leadership and management processes and functions

f) policy studies including issues of law, politics, and economic dimensions of education

g) moral and ethical dimensions of schooling in a pluralistic society

2. An appropriate master's degree should be a prerequisite to professional preparation programs.

3. Professional preparation programs should be systematic, sequential, and linked to the knowledge base and best practices of the field.

4. Professional preparation programs should include concentrated periods of full-time study and supervised clinical practice.

5. Long-term formal relationships should be established between university, professional preparation programs, school districts, and other appropriate agencies to create partnership sites for clinical study, field residency, and applied research.

6. Preparation programs should involve a critical mass of full-time faculty, whose appointments are in the department in which school administrators are educated, and who exhibit excellence in scholarship, teaching in educational administration, and sensitivity to the needs and concerns of practitioners.

7. Recruitment and admission to administrator preparation programs should be characterized by:

a) written systematic plans

b) deliberate efforts to attract racial and ethnic minorities and women

c) deliberate efforts to attract persons of high intelligence

d) deliberate efforts to attract persons of exceptional interpersonal skill

e) deliberate efforts to attract exceptionally successful educators

f) the use of multiple sources of evidence

8. Professional preparation programs should develop and maintain systematic efforts to assist all students in professional placement and career advancement.

9. In cooperation with appropriate professional associations and other educational and social agencies, preparation program faculty should participate in the development, delivery, and evaluation of systematic professional development programs for educational leaders.

**Proposed Implementation**

To implement the type of program envisioned by UCEA, the following is proposed as the new administrator training program at the University of Arkansas.

The concept is directed toward a systematic professional development program of a curriculum leader, a person equipped to provide the kind of leadership which the 21st century will require. Schools are going to be different places in the future. The change can be imposed externally or improvement can be made as a result of internal thinking. The latter course will result in the better educational situation. The reason is simple, teachers and administrators who buy into a program, make it theirs, will make it work. Imposition results in only surface cooperation. We cannot afford the latter. The only way to get the former is to train people to bring it about.

1. The basic certification for a principal will be based upon the Specialist degree. The Master's degree in Educational Administration will no longer be offered only as an elective. This is to satisfy salary schedule requirements by school districts.

2. Prospective students will earn a Master's degree in an area of Teacher Education or Counseling. This sort of preparation will equip the prospective principal with the background needed to become an

instructional leader.

3. As part of the degree, students will be expected to take courses in:

a) Counseling,
b) Research,
c) Curriculum,
d) Computer Technology, and
e) A Cognate.

4. The Specialist degree will include an internship (clinical field experience) in a public school, directed by University faculty.

5. In addition to the clinical field experience students will be provided with course centered experiences. These will include:

a) a background in school organization and theories of administration

b) an extensive exposure of the theory and practice of supervision and instructional leadership

c) exploration of school finance from the federal, state, and local levels as well as the development of a background in school business management to allow for site-based administration

d) study in the area of personnel management to permit continuous school renewal

e) a solid background in school law must be attained to provide for the orderly conduct and unchallenged operation of the school

f) a knowledge of research methods and use directed at practical and real current school district problems will be developed

g) an exposure to social and behavorial sciences and/or the humanities

h) the development of effective planning skills

6. Certification as a principal will be recommended at the level covered by the teaching certificate held and the curriculum courses taken. There will not be a general certification as a principal.

7. Certification, as a Superintendent, will encompass four areas above the Specialist. The areas are:

a) a knowledge of collective bargaining

b) a background in leadership and school governance

c) a further exposure to school law from the school district viewpoint

d) advanced internship

8. Students who hold a Master's degree in Educational Administration may be admitted to the Specialist program without make-up work until 1995. The new program will begin in the Fall of 1990.

9. Admission to the program will be based on a profile. The profile will consist of:

a) Three years teaching experience

b) Satisfactory test scores on standardized tests

c) References from employers

d) Demonstrated writing ability

e) Professional promise

f) Assessment Center data as available

**The Doctoral Program**

The doctoral program will be built upon the Specialist. It will consist of a series of five doctoral seminars; three courses in cognate field and nine hours of statistics and research.

**Admission**

Request to admission will be based upon a profile of the prospective students. This profile will include:

1. Standardized Test Score
2. Previous Graduate Work
3. Writing Ability
4. Professional Experience
5. Recommendations
6. Personal Interview
7. Professional Promise

For consideration, the student must hold the Specialist degree or equivalent, have a minimum of three years teaching experience, and, preferably, administrative experience. No other absolute minimums will be required.

**Recruitment**

Every effort will be made to increase recruitment of prospective students especially women and other minorities.

**Residence**

Each student will be expected to spend a minimum of one academic year in full-time study.

The entire concept is directed at strengthening school leadership and as a result, strengthening schools for the 21st century. The school administrator of the future will face severe challenges. We can only guess at some. As the drug problem becomes worse, as more and more foreign competition intensifies, schools will be called upon to change. It seems doubtful the school of the 21st century will look like the school of today.

The best we can do now is prepare people to accept the new events as challenges rather than threats. We must train them to solve problems and to build the future not on the mistakes of the past but in new creative directions.

**Practitioners' Opinions - The Survey**

In all of the discussion over professional preparation programs, one important element in the mix has tended to be ignored. This is the practitioner. In reform material, there is much talk about using such persons as clinicians and depending upon them for internship experiences. Yet, little attempt has been made to include them in the discussion.

If one wishes to organize and lead for learning, it would seem essential that these persons expected to be doing the organizing and leading to be represented in the design. As a result, a number of the recommendations regarding administrator selection and training

made both by UCEA and the National Policy Board were made into a questionnaire. This questionnaire was sent to one thousand, four hundred and forty (1,440) practicing administrators, all of the principals and superintendents in the state of Arkansas. One thousand and sixty-five (1,065) were returned.

Several items were not covered. These were chiefly more or less motherhood and apple pie types of recommendations and chiefly affected the training institution. Hence, the survey did not include any references to the critical mass of faculty and the development of a knowledge base.

The following results were obtained:

1. Regarding the possession of an appropriate master's degree as a prerequisite to a professional preparation program, the respondents agreed that there should be a master's degree in a teaching area, although the preponderant answer was undecided. On the other hand, they significantly opposed the idea that administrator certification should be based upon the specialist degree. Thus, we are left with the conclusion that they feel that certification should be based upon the master's degree with some additional course work.

A third item may shed some light on this matter. The group was asked whether or not certification as a superintendent should require more courses over a license as a principal. This was strongly supported. Thus, it may be concluded that an advanced degree such as the specialist could be considered a basic requirement for a superintendency.

2. The matter of supervised clinical practice and full-time study were made the objects of questions. The respondents were

significantly in favor of everyone preparing to be an administrator having an internship. Thus, clinical practice would seem a most acceptable feature of administrator preparation. On the other hand, the idea that a doctoral program should include at least two semesters in residency was rejected more definitely than any other item. Evidently, the desire is for advanced degrees, but without the concentrated periods of study envisioned by UCEA.

As further evidence of this, it was strongly agreed that more persons would earn doctorates if there were good-sized fellowships available, yet by almost the same degree, the respondents favored the University offering an off-campus doctoral program in Little Rock. It would seem, therefore, that we are forced by a matter of economics and convenience. Conceivably, students might be attracted to a residency program if fellowships existed, but in their absence, want the degree delivered on a part-time basis in a more easily reached location. The evident question is whether or not the respondents were more interested in a degree and title or in learning something. Although this sounds like an insidious accusation, it would still seem to be the basis of making admissions choices regardless of what program is offered. As further evidence of the degree being a more important consideration, is the fact that an off-campus specialist degree offered in southeastern Arkansas was found acceptable, the degree of acceptance was nowhere close to that of the off-campus doctorate. Finally, the respondents were asked whether or not the doctorate was, in their opinion, a requirement for the superintendency especially in larger districts. This was accepted, but far less strongly than the off-campus doctoral program. It creates

wonder as exactly why such a large number of persons wanted the degree if they saw no real professional advancement accruing to it.

Regarding long-time, formal relationships between the University and school districts leading to partnerships, the respondents gave several clues. When asked whether school districts should help select persons to be trained as administrators, they favored the idea, although not overwhelmingly. To a direct question regarding the matter of administrator preparation being more of a partnership between the districts and the University, they strongly supported the concept. Added to this, they were asked to respond to an item which stated that graduate programs in school administration should have less theory and more practical applications. This elicited the highest level of agreement of any item on the questionnaire. Thus, it would seem that if any recommendation of UCEA is popular with practitioners, it is the matter of a closer partnership.

One area in which the respondents did not wish to see the partnership make any changes had to do with a single administrator license covering both elementary and secondary schools. They were significantly in favor of keeping the certification for elementary and secondary principalships separate.

From the respondents' viewpoint, one area in which a partnership could do more is in the area of in-service education. The idea that the University should engage in systematic continuing education program for practitioners was strongly supported. This has in the past been a weak link between universities and the field. In large part, this has been due to the insistance by university administrators that all instructional activities of staff had to be

measured in credit hours taught. Continuing education, excpet for extension classes, does not readily fit this mold. Hence, short courses, conference, and workshops have become the purview of the State Department of Education and professional administrator organizations. This situation has tended to make continuing education either, instruction as to the filling out of this year's new forms or frothy motivational experiences which add little to job competence. Therefore, continuing education remains a recognized area of need which a real partnership can fill.

Therefore, it would seem that there is general support for the proposals of UCEA with two or possibly three glaring exceptions. These are the rejections of the master's degree as a prerequisite for administrator training, a strong reaction against full-time study, and a violent opposition to theory as opposed to practice, which is only hinted at in the UCEA document.

Just because something is unpopular does not mean it is wrong. School taxes are not particularly well received, but without them, we would all be running or working in private schools. Students need theory. Actually, it alone perpetuates. The nuts and bolts rules and regulations change. One could collect bets on this being different in a few years.

Basing administrator certification on a higher degree than the master's will accomplish several things:]

1. It will permit the principal to be better prepared than members of his or her staff.

2. It will permit the principal to develop a better background to administer an increasingly complex organization.

3. It will give the principal a breadth of knowledge to permit the flexibility as well as leadership characteristics which he or she will need as schools are caused to change to fit the needs of the twenty-first century.

Full-time study for the doctorate is another area on which there was disagreement. Yet, the need to reflect and think are important aspects of advanced study. The whole area of reflection is becoming recognized as a need in leadership preparation. Picking up a degree, a course or so at a time while fully employed, provides little or no opportunity for reflection, thought, or introspection. Rather than dropping the residency requirement, universities must work with schools in providing sabbatical leaves, with legislation to provide financial support for full-time residency as in North Carolina and within their own structures to provide for more assistantships. If not people will be granted a degree, but not provided with an education. This is not a way to attract and keep the best and brightest in leadership roles.

Finally, we are told that we teach too much theory. Yet, theory is lasting. Practical applications are ephemeral. The same case can be made for it as for the increase in certification requirements.

The whole idea is to give the student a matrix of values and beliefs which can be used as a reference to deal with the new and unexpected. Theory must be the foundation of practice not its antithesis. Perhaps what the respondents are telling us is that universities do a poor job in teaching theory and underlining its importance.

In summary, unless the best and brightest can be recruited and trained as tomorrow's educational leaders, the future will indeed be

bleak. The University of Arkansas is attempting to do this by implementing the proposals of the University Council for Educational Administration. A survey of all practicing administrators in the state reveals widespread support for these changes, with three exceptions, may possibly reflect more on program delivery by the University than any other factor. In any case, the time to prepare for tomorrow is now.

END

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